

American Opinion

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

3/23/62

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1962 PUNTA DEL ESTE CONFERENCE AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS

Main Conclusions

- 1- A majority of those commenting stressed the achievement of worthwhile gains at the 1962 Punta del Este conference. A number praised the work of the U. S. delegation, citing Secretary Rusk's "unusual skill and patience."
- 2- But sizable groups either: 1) criticized the Administration for permitting a "humiliating defeat," or 2) said it was unclear whether the outcome was a "victory" or a "defeat."
- 3- Some commentators were gratified by subsequent statements by Argentina and Brazil (at the UN); but these developments were accorded relatively little editorial attention.
- 4- Imposition of the tighter U.S. embargo received general acceptance, although some editors felt that the action was either "belated" or insufficient to deal with the situation confronting the U.S.
- 5- A few commentators held that aid under the Alliance for Progress program should be withheld from those OAS members who refrain from taking action against the Castro regime.
- 6- Some others said that the Alliance is the most effective means of combatting Castroism.

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EVALUATIONS OF CONFERENCE

Although many anticipated that the Punta del Este conference would be unable to reach agreement on significant action against Castro's Cuba, the majority of editors and Congressmen commenting at the close of the session stressed its worthwhile achievements.

Most of the editorial evaluations of this OAS conference were published promptly--usually on February 1. Hence, the verdicts were handed down before Secretary Rusk's TV report and quite soon after the front pages had stressed that, on the crucial resolution, a two-thirds vote had only barely been achieved by those wanting "action" against Castro.

Approving Comment The spokesmen comprising the approving majority were drawn primarily from editors who usually express an "internationalist" point of view, although some with a more "nationalist" outlook are also represented in the list below.

Typically, these evaluators stressed the unanimity of the conference in declaring the "incompatibility" of Castro's Marxist-Leninist regime with the Inter-American system, and on certain other resolutions. Many in this group viewed the 1962 conference in the perspective of the 1960 conference at San Jose. For example, the Washington Star, which had warned that "mere rhetoric" at Punta del Este would not suffice, declared afterward that the "two-thirds vote on the key resolution was a considerable achievement--much more than was in reach a year ago."

Similarly, the Scripps-Howard papers declared that the outcome "may prove to be nowhere near as discouraging as many--including ourselves--had reason to fear it might be." This newspaper chain saw two major achievements: the "divorce" of Cuba from the other Hemisphere nations; and, the fact that no other OAS nation "opposed the divorce."

Most voices in this majority group freely stated that more drastic action (such as economic sanctions) would have been desirable, but they felt that the Punta del Este gains were real, and that they "laid the groundwork for further action" (N.Y. Times).

A list of sources noted as stressing conference gains follows.

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SCRIPPS-HOWARD PAPERS

Atlanta Constitution
Birmingham News
Dayton News
Indianapolis Star
Kansas City Times
Los Angeles Times
Minneapolis Star
Newark News
New Orleans Times-Picayune
New York Times
Philadelphia Bulletin
Philadelphia Inquirer
Salt Lake Tribune
Tucson Arizona Star
Washington Post
Washington Star
Wilmington (Del.) News
Worcester Telegram
Youngstown Vindicator

Roscoe Drummond
Wm. R. Hearst, Jr.
Gould Lincoln
Wm. S. White

America
Business Week
Commonweal
Newsweek
Time

Sens. Hickenlooper (R-Iowa)
Humphrey (D-Minn.)
Morse (D-Ore.)
Smathers (D-Fla.)
Reps. Albert (D-Okla.)
Evins (D-Tenn.)
Fascell (D-Fla.)
Hays (D-Ohio)
Judd (R-Minn.)
Kelly (D-N.Y.)
Matthews (D-Fla.)
Morrow (R-N.H.)
Morgan (D-Pa.)
Rogers (D-Fla.)
Selden (D-Ala.)
Smith (D-Miss.)

Critical Comment Most of those who took a primarily critical view of the OAS session are well-known for their "nationalist" outlook; but some of those listed below do not belong in that category.

Contrasting U.S. advance goals of securing stringent sanctions with the actual results, critics declared the U.S. had suffered a "failure" (Gov. Rockefeller), a "humiliating defeat" (Cincinnati Enquirer), or even a "catastrophe" (syndicated columnist Thayer Waldo). Somewhat less lugubrious, the New York Mirror saw the Punta del Este outcome as "not much of a victory"---"merely a moral victory" because of the "over-all failure to come to grips with the threat of international communism."

The New York News wanted to know when the "alleged victory" would "begin to pay off." Lyle Wilson of Scripps-Howard predicted that Congress would take a "hard look" at this "Kennedy reverse." To the Detroit Free Press, the "gentle slap" administered by the OAS was "more likely to encourage" Castro than to "make him see the error" of his ways.

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Burlington (Vt.) Free Press
Chicago Tribune
Cincinnati Enquirer
Detroit Free Press
Fort Worth Star-Telegram
Long Island Newsday
Manchester (N.H.) Union Leader
New York Mirror
New York News
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
St. Louis Globe-Democrat

George Dixon
R.T. Hartmann in L.A. Times
Lyle Wilson
Thayer Waldo

Gov. Rockefeller (R-N.Y.)
Sen. Capehart (R-Ind.)
Reps. Alger (R-Tex.)
Broomfield (R-Mich.)
Derounian (R-N.Y.)

National Review

Mixed Verdicts Another sizable group of commentators turned in verdicts which mixed criticism and approval of Punta del Este. Both "nationalist" and "internationalist" sources are included in the list given below.

To the Milwaukee Journal, it was "unclear" whether the OAS session represented a "victory," a "defeat," or a "compromise." The Denver Post entitled its evaluation: "Victory-Defeat." According to the Wall Street Journal, Punta del Este was "disappointing, but not fruitless." The San Diego Union saw "the shakiest of victories," and the Louisville Courier-Journal characterized the conference as "not a great victory."

Some in this group stressed that the action taken was "not sufficient to halt the Communist threat" (Charlotte Observer). It would be "unfortunate," concluded the New York Herald Tribune, "if the United States either plumed itself upon the results--or became discouraged about them."

Charlotte Observer
Dallas News
Denver Post
Louisville Courier-Journal
Milwaukee Journal
New York Herald Tribune
New York Journal-American
(N.Y.) Wall Street Journal
Richmond Times-Dispatch
San Diego Union
Watertown Times

Nation
Sen. Dirksen (R-Ill.)

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U.S. Delegation A number of editors and Congressmen commenting on Punta del Este praised the "unusual skill and patience" of Secretary Rusk (e.g. Birmingham News, Newark News, Newsweek, Erwin Canham, Wm. R. Hearst, Jr., Drew Pearson). The Congressional members of the delegation also drew special praise, a number saying that they were a strong force in demonstrating American insistence on "action" against Castro. However, a few "nationalists" charged that the three delegation members especially associated with the White House (Messrs. Goodwin, Rostow, and Schlesinger) were not only "inexperienced" in Latin American affairs, but favored a "soft" policy against Castro (e.g. Walter Trohan in Dallas News; Human Events).

U.S. Planning Some leading journals were critical of U.S. planning for the Punta del Este conference. "Why wasn't opposition to sanctions seen in advance?" asked the New York Herald Tribune (similarly, N.Y. Times, Balt. Sun, Phila. Bulletin). "Where we would fault the Administration," declared Hearst's New York Journal-American, "is for seeking sanctions when there was no chance of getting them. It made us look bad." "Flaws" in U.S. intelligence were seen by Doris Fleeson and the Louisville Courier-Journal; and the latter thought it would have been wiser to postpone the conference.

But Virginia Prewett upbraided New York newspapers for criticizing Washington "for 'holding' the Punta del Este meeting without being 100 percent sure of results there--as if we had a choice about holding it." Miss Prewett said that "Washington knows the story thoroly" and that if the U.S. had "softened one inch more" a number of OAS members "would have bolted the game."

Role of Alliance Some mixed comment was stirred by news reports that Secretary Rusk was using American contributions through the Alliance for Progress as a "carrot-and-stick" to encourage reluctant OAS members to "take action" against the Castro regime. Warm applause for this tactic came promptly from the Scripps-Howard and Hearst newspaper chains (also Houston Chronicle, N.Y. News, Omaha World-Herald, Memphis Commercial Appeal, St. Louis Globe-Democrat). Some held that no Alliance aid should go to nations failing to stand against Castro.

Such a linking of the Alliance with action against Castro was regarded as questionable by the Baltimore Sun, and strongly deplored by the New York Herald Tribune, which saw such a move as a return to the "root cause" of our past failure in Latin American relations. Objections to cutting Alliance funds to countries

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refraining from strong anti-Castro action were registered by the New York Post, Christian Science Monitor, Louisville Courier-Journal, and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. When Presidential Adviser Chester Bowles voiced similar sentiments in a TV appearance, he was sharply reprimanded by the Cincinnati Enquirer and Virginia Prewett.

Splitting OAS The public division among OAS members on the resolutions adopted at Punta del Este was deplored by some editors who differed in their evaluations of conference success (e.g. Phila. Bulletin, Milwaukee Journal, Omaha World-Herald). To the Memphis Commercial Appeal, Castro had not been actually "isolated." Rep. Wilson (R-Cal.) inserted in the Congressional Record the verdict of Tad Szulc of the New York Times: "Punta del Este was hardly worth the drastic split."

The Indianapolis Star, however, rejoiced that Secretary Rusk had "tossed overboard the fear of splitting the OAS and decided to go ahead" with a demand to oust Cuba from the Organization. To the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, the split was a "good thing," enabling us to "know who our friends are."

On the other hand, the Baltimore Sun denied that there had been a significant split, and some others doubted there was a "serious division" (Kansas City Times, Minneapolis Star). This issue "depends on the future," thought the Christian Science Monitor.

Next Steps Further OAS moves to prevent Castroist subversion
For OAS successes were encouraging to some (e.g. Wall Street
Journal, Roscoe Drummond); but Eric Sevareid stressed
the past "incompetence and bribability" of counter-intelligence
systems in Latin America.

What the Scripps-Howard press suggested was establishment of a Caribbean Treaty Organization (on the pattern of NATO) in which the U.S. would be joined by those Central American and other states of the region who are willing to undertake commitments to promote their mutual defense.

POST-CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENTS

Some unfavorable opinions on Punta del Este were modified by the subsequent action of Argentina in withdrawing its ambassador from Havana, and by the position of Brazil and other Latin American countries in the debates at the UN.

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U.S. policy respecting Cuba was also discussed following imposition of the U.S. trade embargo and the OAS action excluding Cuba from its councils.

Argentine Action Recall of the Argentine ambassador from Havana
was welcomed by many--although some regretted the prominence of military pressures in the decision. Those disappointed in the Punta del Este outcome "wailed too soon," declared the (Tucson) Arizona Star. "Another point for Uncle Sam" was chalked up by the Kansas City Times because of the Argentine move. This action was regarded as a severe "blow to the Reds" by the Memphis Commercial Appeal (also Los Angeles Times). Others approving the action were: Worcester Telegram, Birmingham News, Indianapolis Star, Philadelphia Bulletin, and Oklahoma City Oklahoman.

The recall was "a victory of sorts," said the Washington Post, "but only the shortsighted would welcome the means," i.e. intervention of the Argentine military (similarly, New Orleans Times-Picayune, Portland Oregonian, N.Y. Times, Wash. Star, Christian Century).

UN Debate Much less editorial attention was given to the debates
at the United Nations, but those commenting appreciated Ambassador Stevenson's demonstration that it was Castro who was the aggressor in this hemisphere (Phila. Inquirer, Dayton News). The Fort Worth Star-Telegram was among those cheered by the support for the U.S. position by Latin American countries, including Brazil.

The tendency was to welcome the defeat of the Cuban charges
against the U.S., but Wm. Frye noted that there were 39 abstentions, including India. On the Mongolian resolution, the vote of 45 to 37 with 18 abstentions could scarcely give the U.S. any "great satisfaction," said the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. This paper concluded that the "invasion blunder remains a basis for Cuba's case. Only time and more correct policies can erase that unfortunate legacy for our diplomacy."

U.S. Embargo Tightening of the U.S. embargo was all but unanimously
approved in heavy comment. The embargo exception relating to food and medicines for the Cuban people was frequently commended.

Several editors felt that the move would not only reduce the likelihood of subversion by diminishing the dollars available to Cuba, but would "undoubtedly hurt the Castro regime" (Wash. Post, Portland Oregonian, Eric Sevareid). Many added their view that the embargo would not topple Castro; and the Washington Star conceded that Castro was "right in saying that it would not prevent the spread of Castroism."

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A number expressed the opinion that such a tight embargo should have been instituted "long ago" (Cleveland Plain Dealer, Birmingham News, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Memphis Commercial Appeal, Watertown Times, Roscoe Drummond).

After the Punta del Este resolution on economic relations, the U.S. move was virtually obligatory, observed the Little Rock Gazette. Several hoped that our action would prove an example to other OAS members (Hartford Courant, Dallas News, Jacksonville Times-Union).

Similar action on the part of Canada and our other NATO allies was urged by several editors (Wash. Post, Phila. Inquirer, Jacksonville Times-Union, Dallas News). Specific criticism of Canadian policy came from a number (Tampa Tribune, Chicago Tribune, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Houston Chronicle, St. Paul Pioneer Press, U.S. News & World Report). But the New York News contended that Canada's policy had offered Castro less assistance than had our own policy; and the Washington Post felt we shouldn't try to "coerce" Canada.

The "cool" reception by the NATO allies of Mr. Rostow's "appeal" for restraints on their trade with Cuba was called disappointing, although some felt that the U.S. had pursued mistaken tactics in sending a special emissary to the Paris NATO session (e.g. N. Y. Herald Tribune, Wash. Post). But some others agreed with the Providence Journal that the effort to "curb Castroism" was worth the risk of "magnifying divisive feelings" within NATO (N.Y. Mirror).

After OAS Exclusion The actual exclusion of Cuba at a mid-February OAS meeting in Washington prompted little additional comment. "Little practical effect" of the ouster was seen by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, since Cuba had already been largely excluded.

The New York Journal-American remarked that it was "no coincidence" that the OAS "followed through on expelling Castro at almost the same hour" as Carlos Rodriguez took over Fidel Castro's "juiciest job."

The Punta del Este decisions are being "justified almost daily," declared the Providence Journal, citing the advance in power of Rodriguez and Roca. These changes suggested to the Journal that the "Communist clique steering Castro will expose themselves and end for all the American states the illusion that Cuba is showing the way to healthy social reform."

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Some Demand Further Steps Saying there has been "too much optimistic reporting of U.S. success at Punta del Este," the Dallas News maintained that the Administration should plan much more than "merely symbolic" action, if the program against Castro is to succeed. Former Vice President Nixon, speaking on a TV program (2/9), similarly declared: "What is needed is a determination Castro must go, and the development of a policy to see that it happens."

Among those who were dissatisfied with the failure of the OAS to take more drastic action at Punta del Este, some continued to advocate that the U.S. institute a "naval patrol around Cuba" (Indianapolis Star) or a "tight sea-air blockade" of Cuba (N.Y. News). Some others continue to caution against such drastic action (e.g. Detroit News-Times, St. Louis Post-Dispatch).

In the weeks following the conference and the imposition of the embargo, there does not seem to have been any great increase in demands for more drastic OAS or U.S. military action against Cuba. But among the minority favoring such steps, strong feeling remains evident. In the National Review (March 27), James Burnham has written: "The ousting of Communism from Cuba should rate first in our operations priorities....No one else will do the job for us: didn't the Latin American countries tell us that at Punta del Este? and our NATO allies when they declined to join the boycott? Our own central power has got to be brought to bear directly this time: preferably--and it would be more humane so--in a concentration so massive that prolonged resistance would be out of the question."

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March 23, 1962

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